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for Breast Cancer Patients

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Table of Contents

Cover.....	1
SF 298.....	2
Table of Contents.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Body.....	4
Key Research Accomplishments.....	5
Reportable Outcomes.....	5
Conclusions.....	6
References.....	none
Appendices.....	none

I. Introduction

This is an annual report for the Center for Biobehavioral Research in Breast Cancer, a center of excellence that was initially funded in September, 2001. The Center was designed to support, stimulate, conduct, and disseminate research and research reports on the biological and behavioral interactions characterizing the development and progression of breast cancer as well as treatment and survivor effects. Behavioral variables, particularly those directly related to activity in biological regulatory systems and defense systems, appear to be key determinants of participation in early detection and prevention programs, effective use of chemoprevention agents, and in patient adjustment, caregiving, and quality of life. This multidisciplinary Center is devoted to the investigation of biobehavioral pathways underlying breast cancer prevention and control, including development of research and training, involving participation by behavioral scientists, oncologists, nurses, social workers, psychiatrists, immunologists, and molecular biologists. These activities are directed towards organization, stimulation, and facilitation of integrated biobehavioral research aimed at prevention and control of breast cancer. The Center has assembled an interacting group of behavioral, biological, and medical scientists to foster new collaborations and extend existing ones in the context of training and education about breast cancer. These training opportunities, free exchange of ideas, and regular interaction will supplement and connect research activity on proposed projects as well as research cores that support this research. Integration of theory, cross-cutting research themes, and multidisciplinary training has begun to produce novel ways of thinking about breast cancer research and innovative, patient-focused research activity.

II. Body

This section summarizes research accomplishments associated with our approved statement of work. Under normal circumstances, research findings would be presented and discussed and relevant publications would be appended. However, this is complicated by the fact that this is a Center project with numerous objectives among cores and research projects, and that funding for major parts of the Center's activity have only recently been released for our use. The difficulties in obtaining this release were due to continuing delays in obtaining IRB approval and human subjects reviews by the granting agency. We have secured approval by the University of Pittsburgh IRB twice since this project was proposed. It has been reviewed scientifically by the peer review panel and by the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute Protocol Review committee. All of these approvals were obtained in a timely fashion. Delays in final approval by the granting agency made it impossible to begin research on the two Center projects until this year. Nonetheless, some Center activities have been established and continued and preparations for the research projects have been completed. Study III has

been initiated and currently seven patients are active participants in the intervention program. Study I recruitment is underway as well.

The statement of work for the administrative core of the Center includes orientation to the goals of the Center (introduction with faculty and medical staff who will be involved, delineation of education and training, objectives, establishment of committees, derivation of a calendar of events including monthly seminars, offering opportunities to trainees for involvement in Center activities), solicitation of applications for training positions and competitive review of these applications, attendance at monthly seminars, and attendance in activities of the Comprehensive Breast Center clinical conferences. These activities continue to characterize Center activities. Orientation activities have been completed and activities such as monthly seminars and bi-weekly research conferences have been conducted and integrated into a single calendar of events used in the local (Pittsburgh) behavioral medicine community by way of a listserves that support faculty and others at the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie-Mellon University, and the UPMC Health System.

Requests for training applications continued and a number of outstanding pre- and post-doctoral applications were competitively reviewed. Two new pre-doctoral trainees have entered the Center program. They are both students in the Biological & Health Psychology Program at the University of Pittsburgh (Jude Carroll, Kelly Zilles). Two pre-doctoral trainees continued in the Clinical and Health Psychology programs at the University of Pittsburgh. One, Tamara Somers, is interested in anxiety and patient adjustment to having breast cancer and the other, Amanda Midboe is interested in psychological trauma and neuropsychological sequelae of breast cancer chemoprevention. Both have completed their masters work, evaluating anxiety and adjustment in early stage breast cancer patients, and coping with stress. Several outstanding applications for post-doctoral training were also received and one applicant was accepted after competitive review. Current fellows include Elizabeth Mundy, interested in psychological trauma, and Melanie Flint, Ph.D. from NIOSH in Morgantown, West Virginia who is interested in PNI. Kendra Stewart, Ph.D., from Ohio University, joined us this year and is interested in psychosocial interventions. In addition, Center members have attended seminars and research meetings as well as clinical conferences when relevant.

- III. Key Research Accomplishments
Research underway this year. (see below)
- IV. Reportable outcomes
Research underway this year (see below)

V. Conclusions

The activities of the Center have been sharply curtailed by delays in final human subjects review and in release of funds for the research core and projects in the Center. Both major Center projects are now underway and all signs point to rapid accruals and uneventful conduct of the studies. However, our accomplishments are not what had been anticipated. Nonetheless, all objectives and tasks that could be completed have been, and support has been conserved so that activities increased immediately once approvals and release of funds were achieved. However, we will need additional time (no additional cost) to complete all research activities. We have been successful in meeting training objectives and establishing the basic core of the Center.